

In course of the recent proceedings it was stated, on the part of the Sewers Commissioners, that they were prepared to get gas made for them at 2s. 6d. a thousand cubic feet; and that even at present the Eastern Counties Railway station, &c., are supplied at 3s. 6d. Large capitals expended on works are no excuse now for high prices, as was remarked at a numerous meeting in Bishopsgate-street, for the public have long since reimbursed all such expenditure, more especially in so compact a district as the city. As for the bugbear about the expense of coal in London, the gas consumers took the same opportunity of shewing the gas companies that they were no longer to be scared or deceived by that fallacy; but what would they have said had they known what we now for the first time tell them, that it is seriously maintained at Newcastle-upon-Tyne that even that town is not so favourably situated as to coal in the formation and cost of gas and coke as the metropolis is? At a late meeting of the town council of Newcastle, in a discussion on the all-interesting and fermenting questions of the price and quality of gas, one of the members remarked that "Coal, it was said, was cheaper in Newcastle than elsewhere; but this was not an advantage to the Company (at Newcastle). They paid 6s. per ton for coal and sold their coke for 3s. 4d. In London 16s. was paid for coal, and 17s. realized by the coke." Moreover, when we consider that each ton of coals produces about 12 cwt. of coke, besides 8,000 to 9,000 feet of gas (at 6s. per 1,000 in the city), what are we to think of the assertion on the part of the gas companies that the question as to the price of gas is one entirely dependent on the expense of coal?

In fine we may state, that the movement pervades the whole country,—that, as a gas consuming correspondent of a provincial contemporary remarks, "a general and most just stir is making at this time in reference both to the charges made by the gas companies and the quality of the gas supplied."

With the electric light (which, according to its friends, is to cost something less than nothing) just seen above the horizon, the gas companies should now at all events mind their look out. Better late than never; although there is such a time as "too late."

SHIP TIMBER.—NEW FOREST.

FROM the great public interest awakened by the late plunder of oaks detected in this royal domain, and the solemn averments on behalf of and by the Commissioners of Crown Lands, people are actually led to suppose that timber sufficient for the building of a squadron might be cut there for naval purposes, and that the extent of at least 20,000 acres, out of 40,000, is covered with monarch oaks,—in fact, that they could "scarcely see the wood for trees."

Considering the utter uselessness of these wastes for all other productive purposes—the vast staff of rangers, verderers, and officials, connected with this and the other royal forests—the host of commissioners, secretaries, and employees, at the offices of Woods, Whitehall, and at the various localities of Free Warren, most certainly the people of England have a right to expect that so much land abstracted from food-producing tillage should at least furnish its contingent to the wooden walls of the island. But how stands the case? Why, in fact, that you may ride for miles without seeing a tree! Here and there a few stunted pollards relieve the eye ranging over barrenness, and at fitful distances a few groves may be found on diligent search on the more fertile portions, and near the enclosures of private owners. These latter are, of course, more convenient for freebooters; and here it was that so much havoc has been made. Take, however, the expenses of public officers and servants from the produce of the timber sales effected, and we shall find but a very sorry return for national purposes.

vering concentration of efforts on one point, at one time, all that should be carried out to a triumphant issue. But if both ends be simultaneously accomplished by the onward impetus of the one movement already set up, so much the better: both are objects equally called for and equally desirable.

* The annual consumption of gas in London, it is estimated, is upwards of 3,000,000,000 cubic feet, while 250,000 chaldrons of coals are consumed by the various gas works.

It appears, however, that instead of being cut and sent to the docks at Portsmouth, all timber felled in the New Forest is sold without discrimination of use, and that the contracts for the Navy are given to merchants by tender, who procure their timber where they please,—and that these tenders are given, not to the lowest bidder, but to the favourite at head quarters; not one stick coming necessarily from the forest: thus the commissioners stick at nothing. Then as to the venison (for there are deer on the range), we find that 720 hucks are distributed annually amongst officers of state and bishops, and of course the Royal table is supplied.

This, then, is the whole use of the New Forest: the same may be said of the Forest of Dean, of Windsor, Epping, and sundry others.

Seeing the vast extent of royal forests (from 100,000 to 200,000 acres) and the incalculable extent of common, waste, and unappropriated land in Great Britain, viewing the wants of the people, the dearth of employment, the insufficiency of food, feeling the necessities of the times, when 300,000 souls are annually emigrating to the antipodes for a field and scope for their industry, one is struck with wonder that no better use is made of these waste lands, or that there should be any such thing in a country which is constrained to import so large a quantity of their daily bread. As to the absurd pretence of producing timber for the navy, that is too ridiculous to hold any longer—no one believes it.

Contractors now provide all timber for such uses; and the trade of our merchants can always supply the best material at the cheapest price,—much cheaper than Government can grow it; and whenever the emergency should arise, there is plenty of oak in England to be purchased in the market.

As timber and woods of greater durability are abundant in our colonies, would it not be a wise measure to export redundant humanity, and to bring back freights of timber from Australia and New Zealand? By sending out saw-mills, the choicest products of those colossal forests might be cut into scantling adapted to the dock-yard occasions, and be sent in return ships: by such means useful colonists might be conveyed to improve our colonies abroad, and to lighten the consumption at home; an immense tract of cultivation might be added to the insufficient breadth of crop now grown at home; a considerable saving would be effected in boards, commissioners, and fruitless expenses; and at the same time a large revenue would accrue to the state from the leases or grants at feu rents of something like 500,000 acres, which are now only used as the beat of the poacher, the walk of the warren, of the sporting licentiates of the Commissioners of Woods, or of royalty, and the lawless province of the oak-dropper: as yet, however, no timber-napping has been detected in the other forests.

Suppose all the forests to be enclosed, then 200,000 acres sold at an average of 5l. an acre would produce a million sterling; or, let at 5s. an acre, having the first five years at a pepper-corn rent, it would produce 250,000l. a-year!! And this land, besides employing 400,000 persons, would be immediately brought into cultivation, whilst at the same time the growing timber, if marked and reserved under covenant for the Crown, might still be saved for the navy as upon farms of private estate, thus bettering the condition of the labourer, enlarging the field of production, increasing the home supply of grain, and yielding a large profit on possessions which, as they exist, are an absurdity, a loss, and a crime!

On the other hand, the timber-carrying ships would convey away to a happy clime and scenes of plenty, a population now in misery, an incumbrance to the land: these would become the consumers of our manufactures; and if freed from the obstructions to emigration imposed by Government in New Zealand (the obstacles being the price charged for land there,—3l. per acre), they would become an independent colony.

The return freight, say of 300 tons in a vessel of 600 tons burden, would, as the timber is extremely valuable, perhaps pay the Government; but the deficit, if any, might be made up from the proceeds of the wastes at home.

With respect to the advantages of Australian timber, and in particular of mahogany, in

the construction of ships, it is a well attested fact, that the dry rot will not affect it, and that in cases where deal and other woods were wasted in decay and enveloped in the destroying fungus, pieces of mahogany incorporated in the same texture or framework, had wholly escaped the infection and preserved their soundness.

Mr. Twigg, a surveyor and timber-merchant of experience, previous to 1840, in a report by a resident committee at Perth, in Western Australia (see Ogle's history of that colony), states to the Government, "I have seen quantities of mahogany and also of terrat timber thrown in waste near my saw-pits, exposed to the sun and variations of five years without injury, and hardly touched by white ants, although they swarm here: these insects attack every wood except mahogany and this terrat gum-tree, both of which grow to colossal sizes, the former of various qualities, hard and soft, and well adapted for planking; and the latter for keels, keelsons, beams, and any purpose where great length, strength, and durability are required."

"In examining waste pieces, deal was first eaten by the ants, next, woods imported from England or the colonies; but mahogany they will never touch till time has destroyed its properties."

Thus we see the superiority of that species for naval uses, and at the same time we but too well know that the soundest heart oak cannot resist the dry rot; but American is the worst of all timber. At the same time all accounts from Australia testify that that vast country abounds in giant trees, both of the mahogany and gum species, to which the terrat or white gum belongs.

With the aid of saw mills these timbers might be converted into plank or scantling, according to model, so as to form stowage for return emigrant ships; or by the establishment of docks at suitable stations, the hulls might be built in the colony, if sails, cordage, &c. were sent out for their equipment: the abundance of copper at Port Philip would at the same time afford bolts and fastenings, which require no very high degree of art in the manufacture.

"The flooded or blue gum also grows to an enormous size, is of extreme hardness and extraordinary tenacity when properly seasoned; it wears to a fine polish and will not split, and is therefore admirably adapted for sheaves of the largest blocks, and for machine work."

Ships which have an immunity from the rot and the worm would be almost imperishable. Sir Robert Seppings might say to such "sit murus aeneus esto."

As emigration and colonization are the absorbing themes of the day, these hints at colonization of the deserts (you may call them deserts in the oasis) at home, are dropped by

QUONDAM.

FIRE-PROOF TIMBER COTTAGES FOR LABOURERS.

OWING to the unpropitious weather, the attendance of the visitors of the Smithfield Cattle Show invited to witness the experiments of the Timber Preserving Company was somewhat scanty. The experiments seemed successful so far as they went. Three successive charges of dry wood shavings, weighing each about 8 lbs., were ignited in the interior of one of the prepared cottages, without any great effect; one charge, on the other hand, rapidly caught and destroyed the rafters of the cottage which was unprepared.

The company had nearly completed the erection of a labourer's cottage of two stories which is now to be inspected at the wharf. They suggest that the expense of the present brick cottage is such, that besides the moral and physical evils arising, as at Hilton, from the disinclination of landlords to incur the outlay required, the tenant is hardly able to bear the weekly encroachment on his wages for rent. A fire-proof and decay-proof cottage of paynized timber, it is asserted, would cost about 40 per cent. less than the brick tenement, and insure a profit, instead of loss, to the owner, and a great reduction of the burthen of rent to the occupier. A correspondent suggests the expediency of the company entering into contracts to build cottages of all sizes on and near the suburban lines of railway, and